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TRENDS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR RELATION
TO THE
4-H CLUB PROGRAM*

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The whole field of education is reflecting the general uncertainty and unrest so conspicuous in our world today. The spotlight of public criticism has been turned on all our time-honored institutions, the schools and the whole educational organization among them. Old subject matter, old objectives, old methods are being critically examined and evaluated. What you have asked me to do, I assume, is to select if I can, some suggestions out of the many that are being made today that might be useful to you in your 4-H club work.

May I say in the beginning that it is my belief that extension work in general has taught some significant lessons to the persons engaged in more formal fields of education? I think it has been a surprise to a good many people that there is this general interest in education, even when no credit is given and no diplomas awarded. Some educators have wondered, however, whether the use of prizes and awards has not been used to a dangerous point in 4-H club work. Competition is a useful educational tool if used in moderation, although some psychologists would rule it out entirely. The general tendency among educators is clearly in the direction of using it less and less. This seems to be in keeping with our general social philosophy which has as its goal the cooperative idea, which calls for greater sharing and more gracious sharing of the good things in life, whether they be material goods or opportunities for study and enjoyment. May I warn you to keep a sharp lookout for symptoms of the overuse of competition?

During my recent visits to State extension services, in connection with my work as collaborator in parent education, I was surprised and just a little bit alarmed to have three heads of home-economics departments make almost the same comment about 4-H club girls. It was their impression that these girls had an overdeveloped competitive spirit. I simply pass that on because I think you are entitled to know it, if you are not already aware that there is criticism. But on the whole I believe that most educators would agree that the 4-H club program has been a constructive and a creative one. However, I am sure all of us, as we face a much changed world, are asking, "What next?"

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After all, the homes and farms and the home economics and agriculture cited in the Smith-Lever Bill of 1914 are quite changed. Our improved transportation facilities, our improved methods of communication, our swiftly changing general social philosophy have created a new setting, even though we have many of the old problems with us. The problem of adequate income and how it can be acquired seems to be constant. Are there new phases of our general educational program that might well be incorporated in 4-H club work?

Some educators are saying that we should have universal education to help us with our civic responsibilities, vocational responsibilities, and family living if the democratic process is to be successful. You can see at a glance that 4-H club work has already been interested in all these phases. Can they do more? I believe they can and that it is certainly important that they set about it speedily. And they need not do it blindly.

Science that has taught us how to build bridges and stream-lined trains, fight tuberculosis and typhoid fever, has not overlooked entirely some of our other needs--as deep seated and as vital as any that can be met by machines and medicines. Scientists are able to tell us what are the common characteristics, the needs, and the cravings of human beings at different age levels, and what makes for mental and emotional health. For example, we know some of the outstanding traits of young people. We know that they are particularly interested in becoming more and more independent of their families in finding for themselves a satisfactory guiding philosophy, in learning how to get along with one another, in finding a life partner, and finding a suitable vocation. Anything in 4-H club work that contributes to these fundamental interests is educationally sound.

Science has given us some other useful tools as we try to understand fundamental human needs. For example, Dr. W. I. Thomas suggested, a good many years ago, that in addition to fundamental physical needs, every human being needs affection, recognition, a sense of security, and some new experiences.

With only these few facts in mind, and there are many others, we could well examine the 4-H club programs to see whether they might be expanded to meet more needs than they now are meeting. One county worker reported an incident which indicates lack of recognition of normal interests. A young woman who was not really interested in livestock joined a calf club, because it was her only chance to be associated with young men of her own age. Surely any community could provide work and play that would bring these young people together, for being together is what they want. I've often thought that a good deal of good community work could be done if groups of young men and women could work together on their projects. Couldn't we recognize this as a natural need of young people and plan for it?

You might well ask: "Are there indications that some human needs are not being met?" Several items appearing in recent magazines indicate that there are such indications, and I should like to call some of them to your attention. For example, in a recent issue of *HYGEIA*, there appeared the following:

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"It is an arresting fact for the consideration of the taxpayer and the citizen that more hospital beds are devoted to the mentally ill than to all the physically sick. This does not include, of course, the thousands on thousands who, suffering from lesser degrees of mentally produced illnesses, manage to avoid the hospital and the asylum and yet always live more or less dependent, unhappy lives. It is often astonishing to see how much can be done for these persons by correct mental adjustment. If what is already known of psychology could be applied sensibly to the education of the young in the home, the school, and the university, much of this ancient toll of human wreckage could be prevented."

Another comment appearing in SCIENCE SERVICE emphasizes again our lack of mental health:

"Four great fields of conquest for science of the future were outlined by Watson David, director of Science Service. They are:

1. The conquest of two great killers, cancer and organic heart disease, and that troublesome endemic, the common cold.
2. Development of energy resources that will free us from our dependence upon fossil fuel of the past, such as oil and coal. This probably means the harnessing of solar energy to do practical work, or the release of subatomic energy.
3. Understanding of mental disease and the make-up of human personality to the extent that peace and fair dealing may dominate the conduct of individuals, communities, and nations.
4. Discovery of the secret of life; that is, the difference between inanimate and living matter, and the creation of artificial life.

In the book, "Children of the New Day", which summarizes the President's Conference on Child Health and Protection, the following statement appears:

"We have the potentialities of freedom -- freedom from poverty, from disease, ignorance, heavy labor, from the danger of the elements, and from tyranny -- all the things which once spelled earthly paradise to men, but we have seen these possibilities fall into dislocation through misuse. That dislocation is much more fundamentally a spiritual than an economic dislocation."

If the President's commission, appointed to report on social trends, was right when it reported that our greatest chance for happiness comes from human relationships, it seems to me that anyone in the field of home economics has placed upon her a large responsibility, since most of our relationships are in homes and in families. Just what we can do about it remains to be seen. That we must try to do something about it is imperative. Witness the large increase in the sale of sedatives through drug stores, the publication of a book on nervous breakdowns by Fortune, with the following on its flyleaf: "The nervous breakdown which coincides roughly with what the

medical profession knows as neurosis, an ailment as widespread as the common cold and the chiefest source of misery in the modern world." And you need only to look about you to realize that we are far from being an emotionally and mentally well people. .

Of course we all know that there is a very intimate relation between physical and mental and emotional health and that they are so interrelated that it is often difficult to diagnose causes exactly. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we need to lay hold of all that psychology and sociology have to offer us. Perhaps we shall have to filter it through our own common sense, since these sciences are so new, and the research underlying them very scanty. We cannot afford, however, not to take advantage of their offerings. I quite agree with Dr. E. de S. Brunner when he says:

"And what more worth-while field for extension to enter than ministry to the human side of agriculture? For we know now, beyond a doubt, that a rich cultural, recreational, and social life comes not by economic well-being alone, though it comes not wholly without it. We know too the deeper and stronger the cultural life, the more the edge of economic adversity is tempered. It is only when a people loses its vision that it perishes and for that scriptural truth, the patient researches of sociologists are bringing the objective proof. Here there is a great area of adult education for the extension service and one I venture to assert it would pay to expand at once."



